

Using an Anecdote in an Introductory Paragraph

Please put the date on these notes and put them in the Writing Section of your notes.

Definition

- An Anecdote is a personal story that is related to the topic of your essay.
- Your Anecdote may be true or mostly true, but should be entirely believable. The purpose of the story is to get your reader ready for your essay, not to make them confused.
- Save the end of your story for the concluding paragraph. This can be the resolution, the lesson you learned, or what came afterwards.

The Structure

1. Anecdote – grabs the reader’s attention and gets him or her ready to read your essay. 2-4 sentences long.
2. Transition Sentence – connects the hook (which may be casual) to the Thesis (which must be formal).
3. Thesis Statement – tells the reader what your main topic is and what each of the three body paragraphs is about.

Hint

- You want to make your anecdote exciting.
- Begin your story in the middle of the action.
- Many writers like to begin with:
 - a sound effect (Crash, the baseball shattered the window...)
 - A short sentence of dialogue (“Mom, I’m home,” I cried as I entered my house.)
 - A surprisingly bold statement (Knowing what I know now, I would never have taken Julie up on her dare.)

Example of Anecdote

If I could redo one choice in my life, I would choose not to ride my cousin's motorcycle. Growing up, I wanted to be just like my cousin Chip, even when he got a dirt bike. When I was seven years old, I asked Chip if I could ride his new motorcycle. My hand revving the throttle, I took off, slid on the pavement, and became trapped under my aunt's car.

Transition Sentence

- The Transition Sentence bridges the gap between the light-hearted anecdote and the serious Thesis Statement.
- The first half of the sentence should contain something from the hook/anecdote. The second half of the sentence should contain something from the thesis.
- Example: Just as I should have thought first about riding my cousin's motorcycle, so Ponyboy and Johnny should have thought of the consequences of their actions before acting.

Thesis Statement

- The Thesis Statement must contain:
 - The topic of your essay
 - The topic of each of your three body paragraphs
- The Thesis must be formal (no personal pronouns, contractions, or slang)
- The Thesis must only be one sentence long.

Thesis Statement

- To avoid run-on sentences, create a complex sentence by beginning your thesis statement with a subordinating conjunction: *after, although, as, as if, because, before, if, since, so that, that, though, till, unless, until, when, whether, while*
- Example: Because Ponyboy and Johnny made a short-sighted decision, they face consequences with the law, their families, and with their consciences.

Example of Intro Paragraph

If I could redo one choice in my life, I would choose not to ride my cousin's motorcycle. Growing up, I wanted to be just like my cousin Chip, even when he got a dirt bike. When I was seven years old, I asked Chip if I could ride his new motorcycle. My hand revving the throttle, I took off, slid on the pavement, and became trapped under my aunt's car. Just as I should have thought first about riding my cousin's motorcycle, so Ponyboy and Johnny should have thought of the consequences of their choices before acting. Because Ponyboy and Johnny made a short-sighted decision, they face consequences with the law, their families, and with their consciences.

Concluding Paragraph

- The Concluding Paragraph should be the mirror image of the intro paragraph.
 - It begins with a restated thesis (in different words but in formal language)
 - It ends with a reference to the hook. This can be the end of the anecdote story or the lesson learned.

Example of Concluding Paragraph

Ponyboy and Johnny have to deal with repercussions from the law, Ponyboy's brothers, and their own consciences since they acted rashly. Similarly, I suffered a hospital stay, a summer on crutches, and my cousin's disappointment when I crashed his new motorcycle.

Practice

- Write a 2-4 sentence anecdote that would get your audience ready to read about an essay on:

Should students all have their own cell phones?

- Write a story about a time when a cell phone would have been helpful.
- Make sure the first sentence is exciting.

Practice

- Now write a thesis statement.
 - Include the main topic of the essay (cell phones for students)
 - Include the topic of the three body paragraphs (make up three reasons why students should have cell phones).

Practice

- Make a transition sentence:
 - Just as I _____, so all students should _____.